

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 233044 TOSEC 140053

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SP, PINS
SUBJECT: INR ASSESSMENT OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPACT IN
SPAIN OF RECENT EXECUTIONS

1. SUMMARY. THE SEPTEMBER 27 EXECUTIONS OF FIVE TERRORISTS, AND THE HOSTILE WEST EUROPEAN REACTION WHICH THEY HAVE ELICITED, ARE UNLIKELY TO AFFECT THE SHORT-TERM STABILITY OF THE FRANCO REGIME. THE EXECUTIONS ARE ALSO UNLIKELY, HOWEVER, TO CAUSE A BREAK IN THE CYCLE OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN SPAIN. MOREOVER, THE RECENT HARDENING AND STRENGTHENING OF THE POSITION OF REGIME RIGHTISTS, TO WHICH THE EXECUTIONS TESTIFY, REDUCE THE PROSPECTS FOR AN ORDERLY TRANSITION TO PRINCE JUAN CARLOS. END SUMMARY.

2. WHEN FRANCO PERMITTED THE EXECUTIONS TO TAKE PLACE, HE CLEARLY DECIDED--AS HE OFTEN HAS DONE IN THE PAST--THAT PERCEIVED DOMESTIC IMPERATIVES OUTWEIGHED THE IMPACT OF THE PREDICTABLE FOREIGN OUTCRY. AT A TIME WHEN THERE IS GROWING INTERNAL CONCERN ABOUT THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE FUTURE AND A WIDESPREAD PERCEPTION OF GOVERNMENTAL DRIFT, FRANCO APPARENTLY DECIDED THAT THE REGIME HAD TO DEMONSTRATE ITS CONFIDENTIAL

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FIRM INTENTION TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC ORDER. A MAJORITY OF THE

SPANISH PUBLIC, THOUGH PERHAPS NOT IN AGREEMENT WITH THE SEVERITY OF THE SENTENCES, SUPPORTS A FIRM GOVERNMENT STANCE ON PUBLIC ORDER ISSUES.

3. STRONG PRO-EXECUTION PRESSURE WAS BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE GOVERNMENT BY THE POLICE AND CIVIL GUARD, ELEMENTS PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ORDER, WHO HAVE WITNESSED 12 OF THEIR NUMBER MURDERED THIS YEAR. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE OF REACTION TO THE EXECUTIONS FROM WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES, THE SENIOR, MORE CONSERVATIVE RANKS PROBABLY STRONGLY APPROVED THE DEATH SENTENCES.

4. THE OUTPOURING OF INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM, SEEN BY MANY SPANIARDS TO BE PART OF A LONG HISTORY OF ANTI-SPANISH (NOT ANTI-FRANCO) PREJUDICE, IS LIKELY TO RALLY REGIME LEADERS--DESPITE DISAGREEMENTS OVER THE WISDOM OF EXECUTIONS--AND LARGE SEGMENTS OF THE PUBLIC AROUND FRANCO.

5. AT THE SAME TIME, WHILE REPORTS OF DIVISIONS WITHIN THE CABINET OVER THE EXECUTIONS HAVE BEEN PUBLICLY DENIED, THERE IS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THEY EXIST AND WILL PERSIST. THESE DIFFERENCES COULD CONTRIBUTE TO A CABINET SHUFFLE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. AT THE LEAST, THEY WILL ADD FURTHER FUEL TO THE MADRID RUMOR MILL.

6. THE EXECUTIONS, THE NEW, TOUGH ANTI-TERRORIST LAW UNDER WHICH THEY WERE CARRIED OUT, AND THE GENERAL STRENGTHENING OF THE POSITION OF REGIME HARD-LINERS TO WHICH THEY TESTIFY DO NOT AUGUR WELL FOR AN END TO POLITICAL VIOLENCE OR FOR THE ORDERLY TRANSITION TO PRINCE JUAN CARLOS.

7. ALTHOUGH A RECENT WAVE OF ARRESTS MAY HAVE SERIOUSLY WEAKENED BOTH ETA, THE BASQUE TERRORIST ORGANIZATION, AND FRAP, THE REVOLUTIONARY ANTI-FASCIST PATRIOTIC FRONT, THE EXECUTIONS HAVE MADE MARTYRS OF THE TERRORISTS AND ARE LIKELY TO CONTRIBUTE TO FURTHER VIOLENCE. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE IN THE BASQUE PROVINCES, WHERE ETA IS CONFIDENTIAL

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VIEWED WITH SOME SYMPATHY FOR ITS DEFENSE OF HISTORIC BASQUE "RIGHTS" AND GRIEVANCES. THE GOVERNMENT HAS SHOWN NO REAL INTENTION TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE BASIC POLITICAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC DEMANDS OF THE BASQUES, AND EVEN A WEAKENED ETA SHOULD BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO ATTRACT SYMPATHY. THE EXECUTIONS WILL ALSO PROVIDE A PRETEXT FOR MORE MODERATE OPPOSITIONIST ACTIVITY, SUCH AS THE WORK STOPPAGES AND PRAY-INS WHICH ALREADY HAVE BEGUN

TO TAKE PLACE.

8. THE EUROPEAN HUE AND CRY ARE LIKELY FURTHER TO
STRENGTHEN THE SIEGE MENTALITY OF REGIME HARD-LINERS AND
TO MAKE THEM EVEN MORE INFLEXIBLE IN THE FACE OF AN

UNCERTAIN TRANSITION. CONTINUING, PERHAPS WORSENING,
TERRORISM MAY PUSH THE GOVERNMENT FURTHER RIGHT,
ELICITING STIFFER APPLICATION OF CURRENT PUBLIC LAWS OR
EVEN ADDITIONAL DRACONIAN LEGISLATION.

9. THESE MEANS SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO ENSURE THE SHORT-
TERM STABILITY OF THE FRANCO REGIME. AT THE SAME TIME,
BY CLAMPING DOWN WHEN IT SHOULD BE VENTING POLITICAL
PRESSURE, THE REGIME IS REDUCING THE TIME AND DRAWING
DOWN ON THE POLITICAL CAPITAL WHICH WILL BE AVAILABLE TO
PRINCE JUAN CARLOS AND HIS SUCCESSOR GOVERNMENT. INGERSOLL

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